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JUNE 1990



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## PAARA POLICIES

Membership in PAARA is \$6.00 per calendar year which includes a subscription to PAARAGraphs. Make payment to the Palo Alto Amateur Radio Association, P.O. Box 911, Menlo Park, CA 94026

Club Net 147.45 MHz Mondays 8:30 PM

Meet at 7:30 PM on the first Friday of each month at the Menlo Park Recreation Center.

Send PAARAGraphs correspondence to:

Chuck Johnson N6VFH, EDITOR  
3309 Mt. Logan Drive  
San Jose, CA 95127

# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

FIRST OF ALL, KUDOS TO RON W6VG & HELGA PANTON WHO STAGED ANOTHER GREAT PICNIC ON MAY 19TH--- THE WX COOPERATED TO THE FULLEST EXTENT POSSIBLE AND WE ALL HAD A FINE TIME!!! NOW WE HAVE FIELD DAY ON THE AGENDA, AND HOPE TO SEE YOU FOR THE 24 HOURS OF JUNE 23-24! BE SURE TO LET GERRY WA6LNV KNOW YOU'LL BE THERE OR SIGN UP AT THE JUNE 1 MEETING. HAVE FUN!!! ALSO CONGRATS TO THE MAY FLEA MARKET CREW WHO DID A GREAT JOB AT FOOTHILL! TIL NEXT MONTH, 73 DE YOUR EDITOR.

## N6VFH SPEAKER OF THE MONTH

JIM ATWOOD KJ6CW

E.C. LOS GATOS, ASSISTANT D.E.C. FOR SANTA CLARA COUNTY, MEMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE RED CROSS FOR LOS GATOS/SARATOGA.....

JIM HAS BEEN MAKING PRESENTATIONS ALL OVER NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND WAS IN THE THICK OF THE ACTION IN THE OCTOBER '89 SHAKER.....

DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SEE AND HEAR ABOUT THE PRE-DISASTER RESPONSE PLANNING, THE ACTUAL RESPONSE, AND LESSONS LEARNED IN REGARD TO THE OCTOBER 17, 1989 LOMA PRIETA EARTHQUAKE.

DINNER WITH SPEAKER, SU HONG'S, EL CAMINO OFF RAVENSWOOD, MENLO PARK, 5:45PM MEETING FRIDAY, JUNE 1ST. ==DE ANDY VE3FZK, PAARA PROGRAM CHAIRMAN==

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESSFUL FLEA MARKET! I HEARD IT WAS A LONG, HARD MORNING BUT EVERYTHING WENT FAIRLY SMOOTHLY. MY APOLOGIES FOR BEING ON BUSINESS TRAVEL THAT WEEKEND. I'LL TRY TO MAKE SURE THAT IT DOESN'T HAPPEN NEXT YEAR. I OBVIOUSLY DON'T HAVE A COMPLETE LIST OF ALL WHO CHIPPED IN BUT OUR EARLY ORGANIZATION EFFORT DEPENDED ESPECIALLY ON K6EHS, K6YT, KJ6TF, N6PGM, VE3FZK & N6FEG. (ADD TO THIS: K6JJU, K6MTZ, WB6QPV, W6VG, W6LII, K6MPN, K6JBR, WB7TEM, KA6LZI, & N6VFH. -ED.)

THE SECOND BIG NEWS ITEM ON THIS MONTH'S MENU WAS THE GREAT PICNIC AT RON W6VG & HELGA'S QTH. 40 OR SO FUN LOVERS SHOWED UP FOR A BAR-B-QUE, REFRESHMENTS, AND A GREAT AFTERNOON OF SOCIALIZING. THE EARLY AFTERNOON WAS INTERMITTENT WARM SUNSHINE WITH A THREAT OF RAIN AS WE WRAPPED UP ABOUT 3 O'CLOCK. LOTS OF FREE PRIZES WERE GIVEN OUT (10 MEN'S & 6 WOMEN'S BY HELGA'S COUNT AS I RECALL,-ED.) AND THANKS TO RON & HELGA A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL.

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS WE WILL BE STARING JUNE IN THE FACE. AND OF COURSE THAT MEANS FIELD DAY. BE READY TO COMMIT TO A ROUGH/APPROXIMATE TIME OF DAY IF YOU CAN HELP OPERATE. WE WILL HAVE A SIGNUP SHEET AT THE 1 JUNE MEETING. SOME OF THE TRADITIONAL ORGANIZERS ARE STRETCHED A LITTLE ON TIME THIS YEAR, SO IF YOU WOULD BE A POINT MAN FOR SOMETHING PLEASE LET ME KNOW. WE WILL DO 3A AGAIN, BUT HAVEN'T YET GOT A NOVICE TEAM FOR KC6AGP, FOOD SUPPORT, ETC., ORGANIZED. REMEMBER WE SET UP THE ANTENNAS ON FRIDAY THE 22ND AND NEED LOTS OF SUPPORT FROM 11AM ONWARD. =DE WA6LNV=

For Sale

**Hallicrafters Receiver, Model S-76** in good working condition. Tunes from the broadcast band up to 32 MHz in four bands. Includes main tuning, bandspread, 50 KHz second IF with a five-position adjustable selectivity switch, separate RF and audio gain controls, tone control, CW pitch control, noise limiter and AVC On/Off switches, and a 4 inch S meter. With original manual. \$50/best offer.

**Two VSWR/Relative Power Bridges 4 sale.**

(1) Knightkit in mint condition reads VSWR directly and relative power. The bridge is a separate unit for ease of mounting in series with your coaxial line, while the meter and control unit can be placed for easy reading. Manual included. Good working condition. Design tested up to 432 MHz. \$15/best offer.

(2) Home brew VSWR meter built compactly with the meter and controls all in a single unit. This VSWR meter was built from the original QST design and is very convenient for measurements where a two-piece unit would be cumbersome. \$12/best offer.

**High frequency SSB transceiver, SB-34**, with built in 120 VAC and 12 VDC power supply. Covers 80, 40, 20, and 15 meters. With receiver incremental tuning (RIT) control and USB/LSB switch. Sixty watts output PEP. Crystal calibrator included. Front panel meter measures relative power. Compact unit with illuminated dial and built-in speaker. Complete with owner's manual and an extensive illustrated service manual originally written for repair depots. \$125.

**Two-Meter, 2.5 Watt, 5 Channel, HT**, with crystals for six channels. Includes belt clip, battery, and rubber duckie. Working. \$75

To grab these bargains before they go to the flea market call Rich Stiebel, W6APZ at home at 415-494-0122.

TNX TO PAARA EMERITUS EDITOR  
RICK WA6NCX FOR THE FOLLOWING  
FB STORY OF HAM HISTORY THAT WE  
CAN ALL APPRECIATE! -ED.

## Meshna Memoirs

Rick Ferranti WA6NCX  
Arlington, Massachusetts  
May 1990

It was a cool, moody day in the midst of a New England Spring when co-worker Ed decided to get a few more special inductors for one of his home projects. He had bought several from John J. Meshna, Jr., in nearby Lynn, Massachusetts, about 2 years ago.

*Everyone remembers Meshna; they had advertisements in 73 Magazine for nearly 30 years, and for a while in the 1960's they rivalled Fair Radio for their surplus radio goodies. I remember Meshna from 10 years ago when I last visited them - a newcomer to New England from the West, I had toolled up there from Boston in my 1968 Volkswagen bug. That visit was not particularly memorable, just a large old building with the Meshna sign out front, and a cramped little front office piled high with the latest offerings from their catalog. Back rooms were visible but entrance there was verboten.*

This visit was likely to be quite different. I had found the latest Meshna ad (in the June 1989 *Ham Radio*) with the address and phone number, but a quick call informed us that their number was no longer in service. "Meshna has to still be there," said Ed, "maybe they just forgot to pay their phone bill last month." So I reluctantly agreed to accompany him on a field trip up to Lynn; maybe I'd find some rare surplus goodie. Off we roared up Route 128 in Ed's infamous vintage Camaro.

A man was sitting outside the service entrance to the Meshna building, just to the left of the big overhead sign proclaiming "John J. Meshna, Jr., Inc. Surplus Electronic Material." Ed walked up and asked if the place was open. "Nope," said the man. "They closed down about two months ago." Ed wondered what happened to all the stuff they had in stock: "I own it," the man replied, "lookin' fer somethin' in particular?" Ed, for whom the word "bashful" is not in his personal dictionary, explained that he needed some special inductors he was sure were still in the building. "Go right in," said the man, who identified himself as a carpenter, "the light switches are on the left."

This was too good to be true. Here we were, probably the last Meshna customers on earth, with free reign to wander around the inner sanctorum of the largest surplus dealer in New England, albeit recently defunct.

The building was just about as defunct as the company. As we walked into the first of three dimly-lit rooms, it became clear that the edifice was built at least a century ago, with fifteen-foot ceilings and wooden floors. A musty odor filled the warehouse-sized area, due no doubt to the fact that the roof leaked in several dozen places - buckets were scattered

here and there to catch what the roof couldn't. Just then a hefty rainshower descended on the building, and I dodged aerial streams where the buckets had not yet found a home. Great place for a person wearing his favorite sports coat and tie.

But the sights distracted me far more than the rain. Here were rows on rows of rickety tottering shelves and boxes, all filled with everything from knobs to crystals to old radio and computer components. Crates littered the floor as we stepped over or around them, exploring as we went, continuing our search (Ed was looking for his dumb inductors; I was looking for radio/radar stuff from WWII). A couple of rows were inaccessible because large shelves had toppled over; in other spots the floor was covered with water and showed serious signs of rotting – no treasure was worth the risk of ending up underneath an electronic junk avalanche! I continued down one row only to realize that I had just stepped on a trap door; Lord knows where that led to. I crept around it on the way back.

By far the strangest room was the cellar, truly a scene for a Gothic 1930's horror film. Here the odor changed from musty to distinctly biological; I was sure that furry creatures with long tails made this area their home. The floor was spongy with dampness; little trinkling sounds emerged from dark corners as the rain leaked its way into some underground Meshnic river Styx. More boxes of electronic offal were here; mostly rotted out with their contents spilling into the murky cellar soup. There were dozens of PDR-27 Radiac sets in corroded cases; what that place needed was a biohazard detector more than a radiation monitor! Neither of us spent much time down here; I began to wonder if I had caught some exotic disease just from the environment.

Ed was finally successful in discovering the Perfect Inductor, and this in a relatively well-lit third room. I poked and peeked, finding only some very beat-up Canadian PRC-509's and 510's, a little junction box from an APS-3 radar, some common junk from ARC-5's, and a pile of FT-243 crystals. Those were left behind. What did come home with me was a mint two-receiver ARC-5 control box with those cute little cranks and dials, and several strange telegraph "keys." These are really just a pushbutton switch with a key knob mounted on it, plus a "send-receive" toggle switch all in a 1-inch box, with attached cord and connector. The keys and control box had acceptance tags with 1944 dates. The spares will make nice gifts for my surplus-crazy friends.

We made a quick package deal for the inductors and my treasures, while the carpenter/owner mentioned that someone had already made a bid to haul the whole Meshna stockpile away. I'd like to have been there when they loaded up those 15 or 20 dumpsters!

The much ballyhooed Deersfield Northeast hampfest in New Hampshire was a rained-out, soaking wet drag this Spring, but here was an experience that more than made up for it. Ed is happily playing with his new coils, trying to figure out how much inductance he needs for a car stereo crossover network. I look wistfully at my ARC-5 control box and tap out a random message on the telegraph key, wondering what really caused John J. Meshna, Jr. to sign off on his business. Whatever it was, a New England tradition dear to two generations of post-war hams has finally come to an end.

**John J. Meshna Jr., Inc.**

## PACKET HEROES OF THE '89 QUAKE

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QST \*\*\* QST \*\*\* QST

THERE WERE MANY HEROES IN THE '89 QUAKE AND ITS AFTERMATH. THE TERRIBLE EVENTS OF OCTOBER 17, 1989 AFFORDED MANY EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO ROSE TO THE OCCASION AND MANAGED TO KEEP THINGS WORKING WHEN EVERYTHING ELSE WAS OUT OF ORDER.

VERY NOTABLY, THERE WAS THE PRESENCE OF PACKET RADIO--- IN OUR OWN AREA THE KA6JLT BBS, WHICH ACCOMPLISHED A GREAT FEAT THANKS TO THE FORESIGHT OF OWNER/SY SOP ROB KA6JLT. WHERE OTHER BBS'S WERE RENDERED USELESS IN THE MOMENTS AFTER THE BIG JOLT, THIS WAS NOT THE CASE WITH ROB'S SYSTEM. WITHIN 3 MINUTES AFTER THE SHAKER, ROB WAS UP AND FORWARDING THANKS TO THE EMERGENCY GENERATOR HE INSTALLED FOR JUST SUCH A PURPOSE. COUNTLESS NUMBERS OF EMERGENCY TRAFFIC MESSAGES WERE HANDLED BY KA6JLT BBS DURING THE EMERGENCY, AND NEVER WAS THE UTILITY OF PACKET RADIO MADE MORE CLEAR THAN IN THAT GREAT DISASTER LAST OCTOBER!

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER STORY OF HEROISM---- FOR WHAT DOES A BBS CONSIST OF BESIDES A RADIO OR RADIOS? IT CONSISTS OF COMPUTERS, COMPUTERS THAT BECOME THE VITAL LINK IN A DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OF VAST IMPLICATIONS, HANDLING TRAFFIC FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD AND CLOSE AT HOME. THANKS TO INNOVATIVE COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY, THE FRONTIERS OF PACKET RADIO ARE ALWAYS EXPANDING AND PROVIDING MORE AND MORE KINDS OF SERVICE TO HAMS AND NON-HAMS ALIKE, SUCH AS IN TIMES OF DISASTER. BUT THIS IS NOT AN AREA WHICH CAN BOAST OF MANY GREAT BENEFACTORS IN THE ROUGH AND TUMBLE COMPUTER MARKET. RARE INDEED IS THE COMPUTER PROFESSIONAL WHO CAN RECOGNIZE AND BECOME ESSENTIALLY A PART OF THE AMATEUR SERVICE. SUCH AN INDIVIDUAL IS MR. DAVID WU, OPERATOR OF THE PALO ALTO MICROCOMPUTER COMPANY. HE IS AN EXTRAORDINARY MAN WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY COMMONSENSE KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMPUTER WORLD FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

AN EXAMPLE OF THIS GENUINE CONCERN OF DAVID WU FOR THE IDEALS OF HAM RADIO AND PUBLIC SERVICE MAY BE GLEANED FROM THE EVENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KA6JLT BBS. AS THINGS HAPPEN, MURPHY SOMETIME SHOWS HIMSELF IN A BIG WAY, ESPECIALLY WHERE COMPUTERS ARE CONCERNED. WHEN THIS IS PART OF A VAST AND GROWING BBS DATA BASE YOU HAVE THE ELEMENTS OF A DISASTER. SUCH AN EVENT OCCURRED WITH KA6JLT. IN THE UPGRADE FROM THE XEROX 820 SERIES COMPUTER, KA6JLT WAS FOR AWHILE ON AN XT SYSTEM, AND IN COURSE OF TIME THAT SYSTEM WAS OVERSTRAINED AND A HARD DISK FAILURE ENSUED, SENDING THINGS INTO A REAL TAILSPIN. AS IT HAPPENED, DAVID WU ENTERED IN TO BRING ORDER OUT OF THE CHAOS. SYSOP ROB KA6JLT AND DAVID WU SPENT LONG HOURS OF HARD DISK DAMAGE CONTROL, AND ULTIMATELY AFTERWARD ROB WAS ABLE TO SETTLE INTO THE AT 286 SYSTEM THAT RUNS SO WELL TODAY (AND RAN SO WELL IN THE '89 QUAKE) THANKS TO THE ASSISTANCE OF DAVID WU.

WE ARE INDEED LUCKY TO HAVE IN DAVID WU A GENUINE FRIEND OF HAM RADIO AND ITS COMPUTER RELATED ASPECTS. FOR THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED IN THE HEROES OF THE '89 QUAKE, WE HAVE ONE IN DAVID WU. BY VIRTUE OF HIS GUIDANCE AND EXPERTISE, A VITAL LINK (KA6JLT BBS PACKET RADIO) WAS KEPT ALIVE IN THE MIDST OF THE COMMUNICATIONS DISASTER OF LAST OCTOBER. WE OWE HIM A DEBT OF GRATITUDE, AND SHOULD YOU EVER MEET HIM BE SURE TO LET HIM KNOW. -ED.

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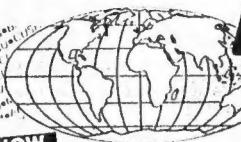
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P.S. WHEN JLT WAS ASKED TO COMMENT ON ALL THIS, HE POINTED OUT THAT PEOPLE MAKE PACKET WORK, PEOPLE LIKE DAVID WU AND OTHERS (LIKE WD6DGT AS SYSOP) WHO BRING THINGS UP TO 100%. -ED.

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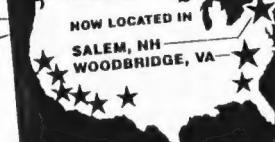
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NEW SOURCE FOR 523 AUTODIAL CODES

Beginning June 1, Jerry Bliss, K6SMH, will be the source for the 145.230 (-) repeater autodial codes for the amateur radio community. From now on, when you talk to a new radio amateur and he/she expresses interest in obtaining the emergency autodial codes for the 145.230 MHz repeater, please say that the codes are available free from:

Jerry Bliss, K6SMH  
17900 Los Alamos Drive  
Saratoga, Ca. 95070

Be sure to indicate that an SASE and a photocopy of the amateur license is required. Jerry will send the emergency codes by return mail.

I am continuing as trustee and will be available to answer questions from any user who might have a problem implementing the codes. I can be reached at home at 415-494-0122 most evenings.

*Dick*  
de Rich, W6APZ



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